

THE DAGUERREIAN SOCIETY QUARTERLY

Vol. 27

January – March 2015

No. 1

Dedicated to the History, Science, and Art of the Daguerreian Era



Amadeo Gras, Guleguaychú, Entre Ríos province, Argentina.
Jacoba Ramiro and Her Brother Francisco Ramiro
From the Collection of Carlos Vertanessian

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The President's Message

Jeremy Rowe, President

If you're in the West you've probably been able to get out to hunt for images. If you live in the middle of the country, or in the East, you've likely been staying inside looking at images by the fireside trying to keep warm between snowstorms.

I would like you join me in welcoming our new Board members, Alex Novak and Len Walle, and Michelle Delaney who will continue on the Board and in her service as Board Secretary. I will continue as President, with Jane Aspenwall as Vice President, and Denis O. Williams will continue as Treasurer. I would like to offer my thanks to the two Board members rotating off of the Board—Sally Anyan and Greg French—for their time, commitment, and service to the Society. Greg will continue to chair the Auction committee, which provides invaluable contributions to the Society each year.

We have signed the contract with the Pasadena Hilton to be our conference hotel for the 2015 Symposium, and we are working on visits to the J. Paul Getty Museum as well as the Huntington Library, Art Collection, and Botanical Garden. As Chair of the Symposium Committee, Erin Waters will be sending out the call for presentations and coordinating the program.

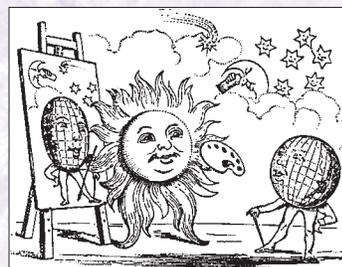
Our collaboration with the European Daguerreobase project continues as we work together to support the research and collecting communities. They have produced two Daguerreotype Journals to date (<http://www.daguerreobase.org/en/journal>). Both are stunning and a valuable additions to our community. Together with Europeana and the Google Cultural Institute they created a virtual daguerreotype exhibition "Photography on a Silver Plate" (<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/exhibit/photography-on-a-silver-plate/gQxWH0VE?hl=en>). The exhibition, curated by Sandra Maria Petrillo, SMP and Maria Francesca Bonetti, provides a brief history of the daguerreotype, as well as a 3.5 minute video of the process illustrated with historic equipment, and many wonderful examples of European Daguerreotypes.

The Board is working to energize our committees—creating formal descriptions of roles and responsibilities and encouraging member participation to help the Society continue to grow. We will send out descriptions of the committees, and areas in which we seek your assistance later this Spring.

As you know, our primary expenses relate to the creation of and postage for our *Quarterly* and *Annual* publications. You are also aware that though we are relatively healthy, we continually operate on thin ice, relying heavily on auction revenue, gifts, and donations. The Symposium has been self-sustaining, but membership dues have not covered publications and operations costs; so, as we add members we increase, rather than alleviate pressure on our budget.

At the member meeting at the last Symposium, we discussed possibly moving to PDF versions of the *Quarterly* as the default distribution with the possibility of ordering hard copies. The Board is moving in that direction—benefits beyond cost savings include the potential for

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Mission Statement

The Daguerreian Society is a non-profit international organization of individuals and institutions dedicated to advancing understanding and appreciation of the art, history, collection, and practice of the daguerreotype, as well as other photographic processes as they relate to the daguerreian era, through the holding of an Annual Symposium, the publication of the *Daguerreian Annual* (Official Yearbook of the Daguerreian Society), *Quarterly* for its members, and by maintaining a website.

Light Exposure Test Plate

Jerry Spagnoli

Back on November 20, 2013, Jeremy Rowe visited me at my studio. I was showing him some nineteenth-century daguerreotypes I have and at some point the conversation turned to the controversy over the then-recently published article about daguerreotypes deteriorating right before your eyes when exposed to light. Now, I have in my collection a few plates that are of no great value but are in a pretty good state of preservation. I decided then and there to conduct a little experiment.

I took a plate with good strong tonality, particularly dark tones, and I applied three layers of black tape to one half of the glass over the image. I then taped it to the south-facing window of my studio. The particular pane I attached it to is acrylic with no UV filtering and the glass on the daguerreotype similarly offered no special UV filtering. Jeremy witnessed the event. I left the plate there for one year, during which I calculate it received as many lumens as it might experience in 10,000 years of museum lighting (more or less).

I removed the plate on November 20, 2014. When I inspected the plate I discovered no change in the part of the image that was exposed to sun for a year. Interestingly the gold and the rouge coloring on the plate didn't fade either (probably because they are mineral-based pigments).

So there you go: a sort of scientific test in support of the notion that, in fact, daguerreotypes can be exhibited in museums and galleries (with the exception of daguerreotypes that have suffered peculiar long-term storage conditions) without fear of their deteriorating before your eyes.

The plate is available for any sort of inspection that anyone might consider useful, particularly at the nano level.



Subject plate with half of image protected by black tape



Plate in hanging window



Bare plate after one year exposure

Donations

The Daguerreian Society would like to take this time to cordially thank all who have graciously donated toward the Daguerreian Society in the calendar year of 2015. It is through your kindness and generosity that the Daguerreian Society continues to prosper. Thank you one and all!

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Just a Friendly Reminder

If you haven't paid your dues, now is the time to remit payment with the renewal due form enclosed in this *Quarterly*.

Thank you, Diane Filippi, Business Director

President's Message *Continued from page 2*

more frequent and longer issues, and the potential to include video and live links. We are still exploring options and will encourage your input and keep you informed as discussions continue.

In the context of the comments above, funding and support are critical issues for nonprofits like our society. We hope that you see and value the efforts that the Society has been making to raise the bar on the quality of our publications and efforts. If you feel that we are moving in the right direction please consider making donations, planned gifts, or endowments to support our efforts. If not, please give us your feedback and let us know your thoughts—we'll try to address your concerns and recommendations.

Specifically, at this point we are seeking donations to support the Los Angeles Symposium reception and related events. We are also seeking funding for another call for papers. Last year the call was very successful in spreading word about the Society and generated many good publications by new authors. We need to raise about \$1,500 to support this effort again this year. Please let Diane or me know if you are interested in sponsoring or donating for the call for papers or in general to the Society—\$100, \$500, and larger donations will be greatly appreciated and appropriately recognized. Your support can make a difference and help keep the Daguerreian Society stable and vital in the future.

Announcement from the Symposium Committee

Planning is well underway for our 2015 Symposium, November 5 – 8 in Los Angeles (Pasadena). The contract is signed for our conference hotel, the Hilton Pasadena at 168 S Los Robles Ave. in downtown Pasadena, California. We are planning to visit the daguerreotype exhibition at the J. Paul Getty Museum for a tour and presentation on Thursday. Lectures will be on Friday, and the trade show will return to a Saturday schedule at the hotel. Saturday evening we will have our banquet, silent auction, and our annual live auction—so please start thinking about consignments and donations to the Society. Sunday morning is the November Rose Bowl Flea Market, which is about three miles from the hotel. We are also working to add tours of the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens to the Symposium schedule.

Erin Waters will chair the Symposium Committee and coordinate the call for papers and Symposium program. 2015 will be our 27th Annual Symposium, and should provide an exciting opportunity to visit to our members and collectors on the West Coast.

Lens on the Texas Frontier

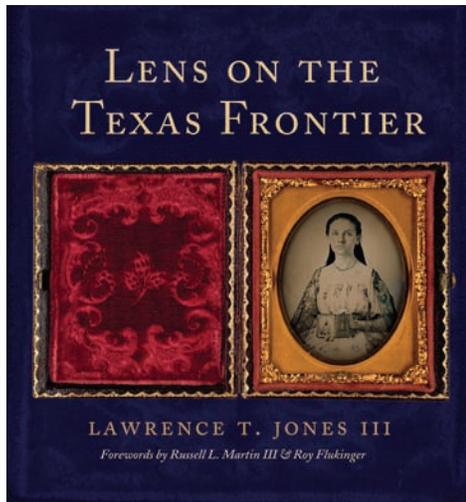
Cynthia Motzenbecker

The recently published *Lens on the Texas Frontier* is quite the eye opener. Texas, to this northerner, had always been a 75 mph state where longhorn cattle are herded by roaming armed cowboys. Texas is shown to be much more than that through the dedicated work of author Lawrence T. Jones III. It's an astounding labor of love for history. Can we also add the love of the hunt for vintage photography? In the first foreword, Russell L. Martin III,

the Director and Librarian of the DeGolyer Library at the Southern Methodist University, where this collection now resides, praises Larry Jones's pioneering efforts in pursuing, collecting, and defining images at a time when photography was easily passed over.

(These images can be found online at: <http://digitalcollections.smu.edu/all/cul/jtx/>.) The second foreword, by Roy Flukinger, Senior Research Curator of Photography at the Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, praises Larry's relentless chase of historical detail.

Larry has the amazing ability to see what the object is, not what someone wants it to be. He also relentlessly follows the history, and where an item fits, it fits like a puzzle piece. Larry has the attention to detail and the insight to "see" a fact in an object and then pursue that to an interesting conclusion. The book is also the epitome of the "eye candy" cliché. You don't want to look at this book late at night or you'll be an insomniac thinking of all Larry's delightful finds. Larry has also sprinkled the history of photography within this book. At the end of the "eye candy" section, he offers a personal and intimate view of the ups and downs of collecting. (It's a wonderful thing when pickers know your check is good. They call you at the end of the month....) After that portion of the book, there's an appendix of unlisted Texas photographers by location, name, and date—something that isn't found in other books. Found in the second index are pages of the graphic photo backs. The book is a superbly complete encyclopedia of the history of Texas and the history of photography. Thank you Larry Jones!!



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My Inner Diorama: A Travelogue, Part 1

Sean Culver



Prologue and Some Context

My career as a fine artist has spanned the past thirty years and during that time I have made eight trips abroad. The point of these trips has been to make connections with other artists, and to do and cultivate new artwork. This travelogue is about my most recent trip abroad to the United Kingdom and Europe in October 2014.

In his book *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*,¹ Geoffrey Batchen articulates the great influence the pre-nineteenth century regard for landscape had on the desire to fix an image—creating photography. Foremost in my mind on this trip was the diorama. I'm speaking of both Daguerre's diorama and Carl Akeley's diorama,² each differently fulfilling a compelling ambition to bring the drama of the landscape indoors to be either an entertainment or scientific presentation. This odd idea holds much untapped potential for new artistic expression. Through my work of the past twenty-two years, I have endeavored to explore the promise of this rich poetic ground.

I have been intrigued with the idea of dynamic miniaturized space since I first looked into my Mattel View-Master as a boy and saw dinosaurs apparently traversing an uncannily three-dimensional primitive landscape. Six months before first attending the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, I created stereoscopic images by taping two Polaroid SX-70 prints together, which fit perfectly into my Victorian stereoscope. I had built a sliding rig out of wood that properly positioned the camera for the two photos. Five years into my career as a professional artist I began reconstructing my photographs as sculptures with the intention of capturing the same qualities of composition, light, and texture. This was my way of imparting depth, harkening back to my previous experiences with stereoscopic imagery. After learning to make daguerreotypes (another twelve years on) I discovered that Daguerre had invented the diorama. I couldn't have been more thrilled at the possible aesthetic connections, considering the work I had produced up to that point.

The story of my latest journey began in June 2014. The rock band *Queen* began a tour of North America, their first date being in my hometown of Chicago. I've been a fan of their music since I first heard them in 1974. I was twelve then, two years after I had decided to become an artist. This band's commitment to craftsmanship, uncanny harmonic splendor, and use of Victorian imagery resonated with me. It was only after I had learned to make daguerreotypes with Jerry Spagnoli in August of 2002 that I learned Queen's guitarist, Dr. Brian May CBE, PhD, FRAS (astrophysicist), is a collector of T. R. Williams daguerreotypes, and a stereoscopic enthusiast. In 2009 I invited him to Bry-sur-Marne, France, to attend the 170th anniversary of the daguerreotype. My motivation was to have an opportunity to meet and talk with him personally. Brian had recently resurrected the London Stereoscopic Company (LSC) and had to decline my invitation because he was busy finishing up their first book. Brian asked if I knew any collodion photographers. He had some work planned for inclusion in the book. I suggested Mark and France Scully Osterman. As a thank-you, Brian sent me a signed copy of that book, which is *A Village Lost and Found*,³ authored by Dr. May and conservator and photographic historian Elena Vidal.

At the time of this summer's tour, LSC was about to release its third book on historical sets of cards. I wrote Dr. May and requested a meeting in Chicago, which he accepted, and at which time I showed him my two latest daguerreotypes. "Keep in touch," he said to me. Reading Dr. May's blog last summer, I saw that he was using a stereoscopic application for the iPhone, which I then acquired and began using. I hadn't made stereo photographs regularly since using my Stereo Realist in my last year of art school.

In mid-July I received an email from the Michael Hoppen Gallery in London, asking if I would lend one of my 5 by 7 inch mercurial daguerreotype plates to an exhibition titled *Negativeless* to be held in September and October. I had made two plates containing clouds within a miniature interior I had constructed, alluding to Daguerre's diorama.



Sean Culver. *Presence Series: Gift*, 2006. 5 by 7 inches gilded mercurial daguerreotype.

Hoppen's show was to include large daguerreotypes by Adam Fuss,⁴ some very large color portraits by Richard Learoyd,⁵ and some vintage daguerreotypes, among which was a T. R. Williams stereo view. I was thrilled at the artists I'd be exhibiting with and said not only yes, but that I would also be there. I try to attend the opening reception or otherwise visit the shows I participate in. I then found out that Dr. May was planning several lectures during the same time in London. These talks would cover LSC's past two books, *The Diableries*⁶ and *The Poor Man's Picture Gallery*.⁷

By mid-September, I had sketched out my month-long itinerary and had written Dr. May, and daguerreotypists Beniamino Terraneo (in Milan) and Dominique Genty (in Paris). Before I left Chicago, I decided that I would make a gift to Dr. May and his coauthor, art historian Denis Pellerin, MA, of some of my new experimental stereo views as well as views of some of my assemblage sculptures (i.e., dioramas), and I had some chromogenic prints made and hand-assembled them on black and gray card stock.

Week One: London

I left my home in Chicago on October 2, arriving early in the morning at Heathrow October 3. My first day was filled with getting to my room and simply resting. I found a comfortable room, which I'd booked through Airbnb.com,⁸ with kind and helpful hosts in East Dulwich. From there, I made daily trips into central London via bus and overground rail. On the 4th, I headed into the city.



Two views near East Dulwich, London

I bought some handmade British watercolor paper and three choice watercolor cakes, including Turner's Yellow. I then headed to the Tate Gallery, where I took in J. M. W. Turner's melting yellow suns and expressive watercolor studies. At that point, I had no idea how much Turner's work would play into my trip. Having never studied Turner's life, I wondered if he had attended a diorama event. The 5th was spent working out my eight allotted days of train travel on the continent, which would begin in five days' time. I also spent that day assembling a portable watercolor kit, utilizing a section of plastic pill calendar containers and a tin clamshell box I'd paid very little for at the local Mighty Pound.

Dr. May's lecture on *The Poor Man's Picture Gallery* was scheduled at the Royal Society of Architects (RSA) and was sponsored by the

Royal Photographic Society. I had been granted a meeting with Dr. May forty-five minutes before his lecture, coming up in four days. Wanting to be certain of location and travel routes, I went to the building in advance, and there found a major retrospective of Edwin Smith's photography. I would characterize the work of Edwin Smith as equivalent to that of André Kertész. I felt an immediate intimacy with Smith's work, having extensively studied Kertész and having myself been a street photographer for twelve years, toting my twin-lens Rolleiflex and 4 by 5 Graflex Speed Graphic around Paris, New York, Istanbul, and Chicago. I fell into Smith's images of steam and black smoke forming clouds everywhere. I was enamored by his backlit, rain-soaked cobblestones and brick, composing a Britain largely past.



On October 7, I made it to the Michael Hoppen Gallery in Chelsea; *Negativeless* had opened on September 19. Michael and his staff had laid out the exhibition beautifully, with vintage works in a centrally located glass case and Richard Learoyd's impressively large prints flanking all walls on the first floor. The second floor contained my single daguerreotype, "Presence Series: Gift," along with three Adam Fuss daguerreotypes, a sculptural piece with tintypes by Tif Hunter,⁸ and two more of Learoyd's prints.

After taking in the show and meeting Michael and his staff, I made a short trek north for a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum (V & A). It was here I saw *Constable: The Making of a Master*, specifically to see his famous "The Hay Wain," which was the first work of fine art I ever encountered; my grandparents, who had lived in rural Illinois in a setting not unlike the imagery in this painting, had

a set of pressed metal TV trays with Constable's landscape printed on them. I took a self-portrait with his massive canvas and got caught by a guard. When I encountered the "No Photos or Sketching" sign at the entrance I told the attendant that Constable must be rolling in his grave.



Recalling the *Diableries* series of stereoscopic photos and having previously seen similarly arranged wax sculptures of skeletons in the V & A, I was disappointed to discover that these pieces had been placed back into the vaults and were unavailable for viewing. Shrugging off this loss, I focused on making stereo images of any similar high-relief sculptures and architectural models I found. I then crossed the street to visit the Natural History Museum. I was anticipating some dioramas; however, by closing time I had gotten through half the museum and came across only one miniature landscape.

On the 8th, I stopped at Shepherd's Bookbinding Supply to gather additional supplies and began to create hand-painted packets for Brian and Denis's stereo cards. On the 9th, I finished the packets, pressed my clothes, and headed back to the Hoppen Gallery, where I spent more time with the show and Michael's staff and had my portrait taken with my work. I then headed to the RSA to meet with Dr. May. We met twenty minutes before the lecture began. Both Brian and Denis seemed delighted with my gift of the stereo cards. Brian viewed them unaided by a stereoscopic device, this direct stereo viewing method being an acquired skill.



Mark Kent. *Brian May, Sean Culver, Denis Pellerin*, Oct 9, 2014. Digital photograph.

Here, I had my first opportunity to tell Brian how his music had influenced me artistically. Sadly, the time he had available was not nearly sufficient for the conversation I desired, yet I was grateful. I had been anticipating this conversation for some twenty years, Brian being someone I admired for having handcrafted his electric guitar with his father in the early 1960s and used it to create unique ethereal tones. I was kindly received and treated with a VIP seat next to his wife, actress Anita Dobson, and some friends of his from Surrey.

This lecture focused on the book *The Poor Man's Picture Gallery*, which is a survey of how photographers in the Victorian era had produced multiple stereoscopic versions of well-known paintings. It was presented in 3-D with a newly developed viewing system that was clear and sharp via digital projection. A corresponding exhibit at the Tate would open in another few weeks. Before leaving, I had professional photographer Mark Kent, who happened to

be waiting in the book-signing line next to me, shoot a photo of Brian, Denis, and me.

Week Two: Italy

The next three days were spent traveling with intentional slowness on local trains from London to Milan. I began painting watercolors on the trains and titled the work with the names of the cities I was traveling between. I referenced the passing landscape with particular focus on clouds and the effects of light. I used the same panoramic format I had been using the past five years in paintings, modeled landscapes, and daguerreotypes. Within these landscapes, I'm trying to capture what I imagine the experience of seeing a diorama would be like—a sublime balance between an artificial construct and a luminous reality. I chose an intentionally limited palette of golds and sepia and, on occasion, blue, imitating the color range of gilded daguerreotype plates. New to my practice was the introduction of marks that imitated the marring made by impurities in the daguerreotype process; little circles and concentric rings of lighter and darker tones, like inverted stars or faraway planets.

On October 12, I arrived in Milan. Beniamino Terraneo met me at the southernmost station of the Milan Metro and drove me to his home and studio. Beniamino's home was like a photo museum, immaculate and well ordered. We spent about three hours eating his wife Natalina's homemade treats, looking through his daguerreotype collection, and touring his studio. Natalina is a documentary photographer and she continually made exposures on her SLR as Beniamino and I chatted and exchanged images. I was impressed by Beniamino's roomy labs with setups for creating collodion prints and daguerreotypes, all as beautifully cared for as his home. Much of his equipment was handcrafted.



Natalina Terraneo. *Sean Culver and Beniamino Terraneo*, October 12, 2014. Digital photograph.

Beniamino was hard at work on a series titled *Ruskin and the Grand Tour*, comprising about fifty larger daguerreotypes and thirty ambrotypes, all of which were spectacularly revealed when he opened a massive drawer. I've subsequently learned that John Ruskin was close to Turner and helped with his bequest of work to the National Gallery. Beniamino said that he was about halfway done with this project.



Beniamino Terraneo. *Cilieggi in Flore*, 2014. 9 by 12 cm daguerreotype.

On the 13th, I traveled to Forlì, Italy, and stayed for two days. My intention was to see the Shrine and Basilica di San Pellegrino Laziosi (which guards the body of San Pellegrino Laziosi, who was a cancer victim in his sixties miraculously healed of his affliction sometime around 1320). Forlì is a beautiful conglomeration of architecture dating back to the fourteenth century. The shrine had a sublime theatrical beauty. St. Peregrine's body was within an illuminated glass coffin suspended just above eye-level in the center of a side chapel.



On October 15 I traveled from Forlì to Parma, through Tuscany, arriving at Sestri Levante, just north of the Cinque Terra, where I intended to engage the landscape for three days.



Sean Culver. *Sestri Levante*, October 18, 2014. 2 by 6 inches. Watercolor on Saunders Waterford mould-made paper.

On the 17th, I beheld a clearing storm, which reminded me of the dark clouds I grew up with during spring and summer in the Midwest, except this was over the ocean between two islands. The dark curtain of clouds above and the two nearly black islands on each side formed a proscenium, which framed the drama of the storm. Their backlit dance of clouds seemed to be the drama between two entities, personified by the islands, which had houses and castlelike structures built on them. Here was a diorama subject if there ever was one. I did seven watercolors featuring the landscape at Sestri Levante, some measured from direct observation and some from idealized memory.

Part 2 of this travelogue will follow in a subsequent issue of the *Quarterly*.

Notes

¹For the duration of this trip I made digital images, including stereoscopic views, using my iPhone 5S. I have constructed an online exhibition of 200 images in chronological order, including the artwork of other practitioners, the entire catalog of *Negativeless*, and my watercolor studies, which can be viewed at <http://seanculver.com/galleries-4/1216-2/>.

²I used airbnb.com to book rooms throughout my trip, not just in London, but in Paris, Lyon, Nice, Milan, Forlì, and Sestri Levante. I find it more enriching to stay with local residents than to stay in hotels. It's not only more engaging, but far cheaper.

³1999, MIT Press.

⁴Carl Ethan Akeley (1864–1926), taxidermist, sculptor, and inventor of the Akeley motion picture camera. He is largely responsible for the natural history museum dioramas familiar to Americans, his best examples being in Chicago and Milwaukee.

⁵Brian May and Elena Vidal. *A Village Lost and Found: An Annotated Tour of the 1850s Series of Stereo Photographs "Scenes in Our Village" by T. R. Williams*. (London: London Stereoscopic Company, 2009), slipcased with 3-D viewer edition.

⁶Adam Fuss: four unique daguerreotypes, two 70.5 by 106.7 cm and two 25.4 by 20.3 cm.

⁷Richard Learoyd: six unique Ilochrom prints made directly in-camera, sizes ranging from 60.64 by 53.02 cm to 147 by 122 cm.

⁸Brian May, Paula Flemming, and Denis Pellerin. *The Diableries: Stereoscopic Adventures in Hell*. (London: London Stereoscopic Company, 2013), slipcased with 3-D viewer edition. The *Diableries* are a set of stereo tissues of hand-sculpted miniature scenes depicting satirical scenes of a Hell, primarily populated by skeletons.

⁹Denis Pellerin and Brian May. *The Poor Man's Picture Gallery: Stereoscopy versus Paintings in the Victorian Era*. (London: London Stereoscopic Company, Carlton Books, 2014).

¹⁰Tif Hunter, 2014. *Rochambeau*. One unique, handmade wooden (walnut) object and 16 small tintypes 37.3 cm by 27.1 cm.

Photography circa 1849: Treasures from the Archives of The Society of California Pioneers—A Review

William Alschuler and James Eason*

The Society of California Pioneers, just a few months after arriving at its new home in the Main Post of the Presidio from its former location in downtown San Francisco, opened its exhibition space with samplings of its holdings of artifacts, ephemera, paintings, manuscripts, and other material, dating chiefly from the nineteenth century.

The Society, said to be the oldest organization west of the Mississippi, was established in 1850 by some of the state’s earliest settlers. To this day it is sustained by descendants of immigrants who arrived in California prior to 1850. Its library and museum preserve a treasure trove of early California and provide a modern-day gold mine for researchers interested in the daguerreian era and later nineteenth century.



Figure 1: Gallery of the Society of California Pioneers. Photograph by William Alschuler.



Figure 2: Cased photographs on display, Society of California Pioneers. Photograph by William Alschuler.

A temporary exhibit of early photographs, *Earliest Forms*, was displayed from January 23 to February 15, 2015 (Figs. 1 and 2). It featured a sampling of about thirty images from their collection of some 300 daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, and cased tintypes. (Their

library holds many thousands of photographic prints, some by the greatest photographers of nineteenth-century California.) We were invited to preview the exhibit by Library Director Patricia Keats and were also welcomed by exhibition curator John Hogan, the Society’s Education and Gallery Manager.



Figure 3: Unattributed. Two portraits of Thomas Drew, circa 1850–1855. Sixth-plate daguerreotypes. Courtesy Society of California Pioneers (C002881).

One of the images on exhibit was an unattributed daguerreotype of Thomas Drew, circa 1850. The image shows him comfortably seated in light shirt and pants, with a straw hat and neatly trimmed beard, holding a pick over one shoulder with a shovel handle against his thigh. This exceptional image of a '49er is the Society’s most reproduced, and was shown at the Oakland Museum’s 1998–1999 exhibition, *Silver and Gold*. The plate is housed in a double case, facing a second portrait of Drew, casually comfortable in open work shirt and neckerchief, without the tools, yet with an equally piercing look and a knife and pistol at his belt (Fig. 3).



Figure 4: Sterling Benjamin Franklin Clark letter, 1851, and daguerreotype locket. Photograph by William Alschuler.

A daguerreotype locket with facing portraits of Sterling Benjamin Franklin Clark was displayed with an 1851 letter penned by him on a lithographic pictorial letter-sheet, sent from the gold country to his sweetheart. This pairing provides a charming



Figure 5: Unattributed. *Mining company that traveled to California on the Ship Roe in 1849, circa 1850–1855.* Whole-plate daguerreotype. Courtesy Society of California Pioneers (C004282).

tangible connection and personal context, so often lost (Fig. 4).

A striking whole plate daguerreotype pictures ten members of a mining company that formed June 29, 1849, and traveled to California on the ship *Roe* (Fig. 5). They look prosperous in fine suits, if perhaps suffering from the excesses of a night on

the town! It seems likely this superb portrait was made some years after the company was formed, possibly at a reunion of its members? It, too, was shown in *Silver and Gold*.

On exhibit there were several examples from family collections, such as two ambrotype portraits of young brothers Samuel and Selim Woodworth, that stand out for their composition. Other Woodworth portraits shown were an ambrotype of young Benjamin with an African-American woman presumed to be a nurse or nanny (Fig. 6), and another of Selim and his African-American nurse. Both are by William Shew, dated circa 1855. Several remarkable portraits originate with the family of General Mariano Vallejo, a pivotal figure in California history. One is an ambrotype of Juan



Figure 6: William Shew. *Benjamin I. Woodworth with nanny or nurse* (questionably identified as the famous Mammy Pleasant), circa 1855. Sixth plate ambrotype. Courtesy Society of California Pioneers (C002862).

Antonio Vallejo, and another is of an elderly woman, long hair down and flowing to her waist, purported to be the mother of Mariano Vallejo.

In addition to exceptional portraiture of early Californians, the Society holds some remarkable daguerreian views. A four-part whole-plate panorama of San Francisco from what is now Nob Hill was exhibited, dated to the winter of 1851–1852. (It was once suggested,

perhaps “wishfully,” that a view at the Metropolitan Museum of New York, formerly attributed to Southworth, could be a fifth part of this panorama, but the plates are not precisely contiguous. See Albert M. Harmon’s “Gold Rush Panoramas: The View from Nob Hill” in *Sea Letter of the San Francisco Maritime Museum*,

2.2–3, [October 1964.] The collection also includes a three-plate waterfront panorama, a mining-camp site with a miner playing a flute, and a view of men moving a large steam boiler on a wagon. A compelling quarter-plate daguerreotype appears to be of a patent model for a “mining machine,” or rocker box (Fig. 7).

At some point most of the Society’s cased images were examined by Peter Palmquist, who appears to have evaluated them and in some instances cleaned cover glass, made documentary photographs, and resealed them.



Figure 7: Unattributed. *Mining machine, circa 1850.* Quarter-plate daguerreotype. Courtesy Society of California Pioneers (C002959).

We also toured the spaces behind the scenes. These include a beautifully arranged library collection, a specialized vault for photographs, and separate storage rooms for manuscripts, maps, and artifacts. The cased photographs are stored in segmented archival boxes with cushioning. Air conditioning and dehumidification are in place and actively monitored.

Although not featured in the *Earliest Forms* exhibit, the Society’s other photographic holdings are worthy of note. They have strong collections by the likes of Carleton Watkins and Eadweard Muybridge, including one of the few copies of Muybridge’s mammoth-plate panorama of San Francisco. Among the unique treasures of their collection is the set of studio albums of Lawrence and Houseworth, comprising an inventory of 1,495 half stereograph versions of the studio’s views of California and Nevada.

We were told that in making the move, the Society lost considerable space of all types but won an attractive location in one of the most historically important sites in San Francisco and California history. They are also neighbors of other museum and cultural organizations, including the Walt Disney Family Museum.

Though there is much work to be done in cataloging and scanning photographic holdings, a great deal has already been accomplished. Some descriptions are available on the Web, and images of the Lawrence and Houseworth albums are online. Much more is only available by visiting computers at the Museum, which is easily arranged with Ms. Keats by emailing her at: pkeats@californiapioneers.org or telephoning 415-957-1849 x130. Admission to the Museum is free, and normal hours are Wednesday to Sunday, 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

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In Search of Paul Morphy

Curt Robbins

The following story is of a recently uncovered daguerreotype now believed to be that of one of the greatest nineteenth century chess players to have ever played the game. A child chess prodigy at age twelve, Paul Morphy would become legend in his time and ours. The daguerreotype of this story was purchased by the author at the Daguerreian Society Symposium in Atlanta, Georgia. October 21, 2010.

After a long search and trying to convince myself and others out of it and into it, the only conclusion is that the unpublished daguerreotype (following) is that of none other than Paul Morphy. I believe the readers will share the same conclusion after having viewed many likenesses taken of him through his short life span.

Paul Morphy (June 22, 1837 – July 10, 1884), was a child chess prodigy. He was called “The Pride and Sorrow of Chess” because he had a brief and brilliant chess career. Morphy was born to a long distinguished and wealthy family in New Orleans, Louisiana. Paul grew up watching his father and uncle play chess and quickly grasped the concept of the game. His family recognized the boy’s talent and encouraged him to play at family gatherings. By the young child age of nine, Paul was easily considered one of the best players in New Orleans. At the mature age of twelve years, Morphy would encounter chess games with the Hungarian chess master Johann Löwenthal, who was visiting New Orleans. Morphy beat the old master in three games. Morphy attended the University of Louisiana State (now Tulane) in 1857, and found himself with a degree but too young to practice law. Since he now had so much time on his hands and from being strongly encouraged by his uncle, Morphy accepted an invitation to play at the First American Chess Congress in New York City. Morphy would go on to win the tournament, which included some of the strongest players of the period, such as Alexander Meek and Louis Paulsen (Figure 1). Morphy was hailed as the chess champion of the United States and stayed in New York playing chess through 1857. He would continue to add more wins to his record. In 1858, Morphy took a trip to Europe in what was a never-to-be match with the European Champion Howard Staunton. Negotiations to play the match became futile between the two and therefore it never happened. Morphy would go on to play the very strong players of Europe, in which most matches, he won easily. Morphy was hailed by most in Europe as the world’s best player, even though he didn’t play the European Champion, Staunton. Morphy and Löwenthal would meet again during his visit in England, and again Morphy would win nine of their twelve matches in which Löwenthal would quip “I was vanquished by superior strength.”

Returning to America in triumph, the games continued as he toured the major cities playing chess on his way back to New Orleans. By 1859, after many games and many trips across the states and Europe, Morphy would play no more. He would take to his law career, but that quickly vanished with the start of the Civil War. Morphy could not get his career established and eventually



Figure 1: Unattributed, New York. Morphy vs. L. Paulsen, c. 1857. Lithograph. Courtesy of Cleveland Public Library. Morphy is at the right of the table and Paulsen is at left.

lived off the family fortune until his end. He died in 1884 from a stroke at the age of forty-seven. His story never ended. His legend lives on.

He is buried in St. Louis Cemetery, New Orleans.



Figure 2: Unattributed. *Portrait of early American chess master Paul Morphy (left) and a companion, with a chess game in progress between them, 1850s.* Sixth-plate daguerreotype with delicate gilt highlights; in a leather case. Photo Courtesy of Swann Auction Galleries.

On February 19, 2009, Swann Galleries of New York sold this item at auction for \$2,880. The Swann catalog described the daguerreotype (Figure 2) as follows: “Portrait of early American chess master Paul Morphy (left) and a companion, with a chess game in progress between them. Sixth-plate daguerreotype with delicate gilt highlights; in a leather case. 1850s.”

From my perspective, the “companion” may be Morphy’s early childhood and longtime friend, Charles Amedée de Maurian (May 21, 1838–December 2, 1912). The boys were nearly the same age, Paul being only eleven months the elder. While they were not actually related, their families were connected by marriage, and the boys were constantly together, attending the same school and sharing the same pastimes in New Orleans.



Figure 3: Unattributed. *Paul Morphy*, c. 1857–1859. Half-plate daguerreotype with hand-tinting and gilt highlighting. circa 1857. Half-round brass mat. Contained in floral leather case. Image courtesy of Christie’s.

In a Christie’s auction on October 3, 1996, a daguerreotype of Paul Morphy (Plate 3) far exceeded the estimated price. It was described in their auction catalog as “Lot 15 / Sale 8482 DAGUERREIAN UNKNOWN; Paul Morphy, Chess Champion (1837–1884) Half-plate daguerreotype with hand-tinting and gilt highlighting. circa 1857. Half-round brass mat. Contained in floral leather case. Price Realized \$6,325. Estimate \$2,200 – \$2,800”



Figure 4: Unattributed. *Paul Morphy (?)*, left, and friend, right, c. 1854–1856. Sixth-plate daguerreotype. Collection of Author.



The author purchased the unpublished daguerreotype shown in Figure 4 at the Daguerreian Society Symposium, Atlanta, 2010. Morphy is at left; it may also be supposed that this companion is perhaps his long-time childhood friend, Charles de Maurian.

Figure 5: Unattributed. *Unknown*, c. 1854–1856. Sixth-plate daguerreotype.

Figure 5 is also an unpublished daguerreotype that accompanied the one shown in Figure 5 in the same thermoplastic case (Figure 6). There is no information or provenance within the case identifying any of the sitters or the dates the images were taken. The relationship of this young man to the other sitters is unknown. There are no photographer’s marks or plate hallmarks evident on the plate or mat in Images 5 and 6.



Figure 6: Daguerreotypes shown in Figures 5 and 6 as purchased in 2010 at Daguerreian Society’s Atlanta Symposium ... side-by-side in a thermoplastic case with no evident photographer’s marks or plate hallmarks.



Figure 7: Unattributed, *Print of Life-Size Bust of Paul Morphy*, c. 1858. Image courtesy of Cleveland Public Library Digital Gallery Images.

Eugene Lequesne, the well-known sculptor, requested that Morphy, who had been in France less than two weeks, sit for him to make this marble life-size bust (Figure 7). Morphy obliged with the first sitting on September 15. The bust was exhibited in the Exposition des Beaux Arts in 1859.

Charles de Maurian mentions in the *New Orleans Sunday Delta* of February 6, 1859, that small replicas (three-fifths the actual size) had arrived in New Orleans by January 1859, and described the bust as “a perfect likeness.”



Figure 8: Unpublished photographic collage of Figures 1, 2, 4, and 7.

From the author’s point of view, it is apparent Figure 4 is indeed that of Paul Morphy, and a great find for the world of chess, which, I have discovered, is as huge in size as it is in its love of Paul Morphy.

The author is open to feedback, comments, and questions from those readers who believe or disbelieve that Figure 4 shows Paul Morphy. Either way, it has been a great and fantastic voyage into the history of a great young American chess player.

© No reproductions of unpublished images of (supposed) Paul Morphy and companion contained herein are permitted without sole approval of author. References: Wikipedia, Cleveland Public Library, Swann Galleries, and Christie’s.

Book Review

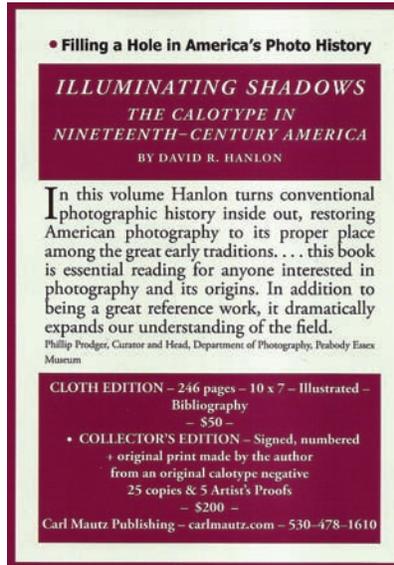
Erin Waters

It becomes evident early in *Illuminating Shadows: The Calotype in Nineteenth-Century America* that David Hanlon has meticulously researched an essential new history of American photography. Readers familiar with the history of the daguerreotype in the United States will see many daguerreotypists in a different light, but the real charm of this book is learning the names that should be added to our litany of early experimenters. These early paper images are just as valuable to the history of photography, visual culture, and art in the United States as are the earliest daguerreotypes.

Americans working around the questions of light's properties at the same time as, and independent of, Talbot included Samuel Morse and John Draper. Morse worked at Yale with chemist Benjamin Silliman and Hanlon reasons that their work, which by accounts produced negatives, was probably done in 1820–1822. Hanlon laments that Morse stopped working on the project but postulates that he simply did not make the leap that Talbot did—a negative image can be used to produce a positive one. Talbot noted this concept in his notebook on February 28, 1835, and, having discovered photography, abandoned it for years.

Spurred by Daguerre's announcement in Paris, Talbot finally announced his process in early 1839. News of the calotype came to the United States that spring and by May chemist John Locke was publicly displaying calotypes he had made in Cincinnati. At the same time in Boston, Harvard students Edward Everett Hale and Samuel Longfellow made successful negatives. In Philadelphia between 1840–1841, seventeen-year-old Matthew Carey Lea made a book of contact salt prints of plant specimens that he later gave to the Franklin Institute. In 1842, fifteen-year-old Josiah Cooke made views around Boston. Some still survive at the Houghton Library at Harvard. Hanlon delves into these stories and others all the while stressing that many of the people making calotypes, and their output, have been lost to time.

In addition to the experimenters, Hanlon also gives ample time to those who tried to make a business of calotypes as well as those artists and travelers who used the medium. In his lengthy discussion of the Langenheims, who bought the U.S. rights



from Talbot in 1849 and ultimately lost their shirts trying to make the process profitable, we learn about their colorist Eduard Robyn, who created a sample book before he left the firm for St. Louis. The book, luckily for posterity, is in the collection of the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis.

Hanlon gives many reasons why calotypy did not take off: the prints' lack of sharpness, poor marketing, Talbot's insistence on selling patents, and some bad luck. Alexander Beckers, who worked for the Langenheims in New York, recollected that "why it should not prove a success is quite evident when we remember how infinitely superior the daguerreotype was to any sun picture made on paper." Of course, when we look at Gustave Le Gray's or Hill and Adamson's calotypes or those made by travelers John Beasley Greene and the team of Leavitt Hunt and Nathan Baker, one can perhaps quibble that those men certainly made the calotype work to magnificent results.

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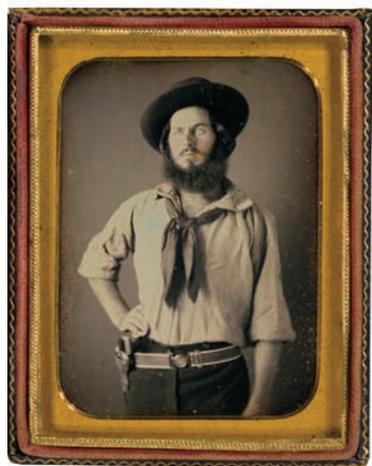
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Member's Portfolio—South American Daguerreotypes

Part One of Three

Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian

Empty Drawing Room

*The daguerreotypes tell their lie:
a false nearness
of old age cloistered in a mirror,
and when we look hard they elude us
like pointless dates
of murky anniversaries.
With a blurred gesture
their anxious almost-voice
runs after our souls
more than half a century late
and there it's scarcely reached
the first mornings of our childhood.*

—Jorge Luis Borges

Collecting daguerreotypes taken in South America is a difficult task, and very often a cause for boredom and despair. In my early collecting efforts, some 30 years ago, I was aggressive enough to advertise in newspapers and periodicals, hoping to reach the so-called “traditional” families, whose roots go back to the early nineteenth century in Argentina.

You see, only a few thousand daguerreotypes have been taken in this country, Uruguay, and Chile; in fact, probably fewer than 10,000. A good estimate is that today, less than a few thousand still survive in the hands of families, collectors, and museums. I honestly believe that the best pieces are still to surface and are as many as the ones already known, kept by individuals who treasure their ancestors' memory. Recent acquisitions, which are included here, reinforce this supposition.

The professional daguerreian art arrived “late in the season” to the Buenos Aires port of Argentina (1843). It was also short lived due to severe competition from new techniques. Thus, it was soon replaced by the ambrotype in the late 1850s. Even though daguerreotypes were still taken well into the 1860s, the CDV and ambrotype processes captured the majority of the market, leaving the more expensive daguerreian process exclusively for the upper class. In truth, the daguerreotype was never “seriously” a democratic portraiture system in the Southern Cone. It kept a high price tag, so images of members of the lower classes of society are very rare indeed.

After Argentina gained independence from Spain (1810), the dominant class retained its colonial heritage, and was mainly comprised of owners of large expanses of land—estancias—romantic intellectuals with a strong attraction to European culture, immigrant merchants, and soldiers. Few members of these groups wished to show their “tools of the trade” and/or their profession, as members of the so-called “young America” in the United States proudly did. As a result and unfortunately,

gauchos, native South Americans, and colored people are as rare as the so-called occupational daguerreotypes and/or views of cities and landscapes. In fact, a very limited number of these images exist today throughout the southern region. Nevertheless, postmortem portraiture was common, as it was in much of the rest of the world.

*Photographs are perhaps the most mysterious of all . . . objects. . .
.. [They] are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation,
and fantasy.*

—Susan Sontag

The severe restrictions with respect to the limited number of images and subject matter produced here—exceptions aside—was the trigger that drove my interest in “only” images of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Assembling a substantial collection and developing a broad perspective of the society of these young South American republics, and “reading” the messages in their images, has been a goal and an accomplishment over the years. In fact, researching and publishing are an essential aspect of this collection, both for the love of the art and the understanding of the historical document. It is therefore, the true *raison d'être*.

Collecting daguerreotypes is easy; understanding them is not!

—Matthew R. Isenburg

Over the years, I have noticed that some “signature props” are repeated over and over again in portraits of specific studios' work. Even though this is not so true in the United States and Europe (since studios changed hands frequently in those regions), in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile there were not that many studios operating. During the early years of the art in the River Plate, a distinctive prop or setup was used almost exclusively by one studio. In fact, whenever I have had the chance to test this notion, the proof was there.

In the comments on some images I have included here, you will find attributions to certain studios, which for the most part are inspired by visual information but also by aesthetics and the overall “looks” of the result. To achieve such a judgment I have made 8 x 10 photographic copies of all hard images I have come across, coming from any collection in the country. This has provided me a helpful cross-view of the work of all major artists operating, and has helped in finding links and/or similarities among them, to better understand and appreciate their work.

The two largest public collections in Argentina belong to the Museo Histórico Nacional in the Buenos Aires capital district, and the Complejo Museográfico Enrique Udaondo, in Luján, the province of Buenos Aires. Both archives have a little over 110 pieces each. From 400 images in my collection (daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, and tintypes) we shall present here a selection of

only daguerreotypes, divided into three parts. Due to a matter of space, ambrotypes are spared and are probably worth a separate future portfolio.

In this series, we shall reproduce, and write comments about, images that are representative of this region, and/or that are rare or unusual. Statistics show that fewer than 10 percent of the existing daguerreotypes in any collection in Argentina are identified by artist. Nevertheless, you will find familiar names such as Fredricks and Helsby, who were probably the two most prolific practitioners in Argentina (especially for the quality, but also for the number of portraits produced) of the daguerreian art until the early 1850s. Interestingly enough, they became entangled in a ferocious news controversy that began when Fredricks—the North American—advertised the “news” of the “electrotype” as a different process from the daguerreotype, while Helsby—of British heritage—found this to be an insult to the “true” inventor, Monsieur Daguerre. The argument between these two professionals probably also deserves a separate article on its own right.

The portraiture style and presentation fashion of images in local studios received as much influence from the United States as from Europe. Itinerant artists arrived from both parts of the world. Quite a few of them were painters—mostly Europeans—who shared their profession with photography, offering artistic as well as daguerreian portraiture services in their studios. Due to this fact, it is not uncommon to find creatively posed and skillfully tinted portraits. There was no case or wall frame production in Argentina, apart from a few colonial frames I have found and that I will feature here.

As a final note, I owe a debt of gratitude to quite a few Daguerreian Society members whose inspiring essays and friendship have triggered in me the love for these little art and history treasures of the past. First, to Matthew Isenburg for his *American Daguerreotypes* (1989), whose words I have a tendency to quote; Dennis Waters for his wittily commented sale catalogs that taught me to “look between the eyes” at these intriguing faces; and Bill Becker, for the vision of combining collecting, researching, publishing, and exhibiting. Finally and very specially, I have been very fortunate to have such good friends as Gary Ewer for his true route maps concerning paper ephemera, published as “Dag-News,” and overwhelming generosity—Gary is “seriously” responsible for my paper craze; and Grant Romer, whose fascinating daguerreian “stories,” knowledgeable advice in preservation and collecting, and untiring enthusiasm, have helped and privileged me up to the present day.

All lovers of the daguerreotype are spellbound beings.

—Grant B. Romer

In preparing this text I wish to thank Tita Young and my good friend Anthony Wright. Both have coped with me for some weeks, editing and correcting the language, with endless patience and reassuring professionalism.

Matthew once said, *I cannot write about the daguerreotype without passion.* Indeed, I have put as much passion into collecting these images as into researching the art and history in them. I honestly hope you will enjoy browsing and reading the notes through these, my favorite faces, and that you will find them as constantly fascinating and evocative as I do.

If gazing at them does not lead to the sense of an exchanged glance, a mutual recognition across the years, then the magic has not worked.

—Alan Trachtenberg



Figure 1: John Elliot (attributed), Buenos Aires. *Sisters of Buenos Aires*, circa 1844. Sixth plate, in leather case. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

Desde niño he oído hablar de esa casa patricia y de sus famosas tertulias. Esta noche su atmósfera me rodea, porque ella ha quedado flotando, como el perfume de los remotos sahumeros familiares, entre los libros muy leídos y entre los retratos que prolongan su charla alrededor de la chimenea.... Digiérase que todos estos personajes quieren hablarme simultáneamente, asomados a la dorada ventana de sus marcos.

—Manuel Mujica Láinez

Translation:

Since childhood I have heard of this patrician home and its famous setting. Tonight its atmosphere surrounds me, floating around as the perfume of incense between the widely read books, and between the portraits that prolong his talk around the fireplace.... All these characteristics want to speak simultaneously, as I look into the golden window of their frames.

Member's Portfolio

The painted column in the background of Figure 1 is a signature prop of Elliot's studio in Buenos Aires during 1844. Elliot, who advertised himself as a North American itinerant artist, is the first professional daguerreotypist of Argentina. He arrived in Buenos Aires in mid-1843, and left the country in early 1845. All known information about his work has been taken from his aggressive advertising campaign in local newspapers, during late 1843 and all of 1844, until he left the country, with destination unknown. Grant Romer has stated about him: "Elliot is a total mystery." His work is the very earliest in the country, since 1840—when the first daguerreian camera arrived in Montevideo, Uruguay. At that time, Buenos Aires was suffering a blockade of the waters of the Río de la Plata (the River Plate) by the French navy (1838–1840). Thus the ship carrying the first daguerreotype sailed past Argentina, and continued to Valparaiso (Chile). Until 1843, when Elliot arrived from the United States, no commercial studio operated in Buenos Aires, or throughout the rest of the country.



Figure 2: Unattributed, Buenos Aires. *Mulatto (?) Lady and Her Son, with Federal Red Ribbon*, circa 1850. Sixth plate, in leather case. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

The Federal Party ruled Argentina for over 20 years (1829 through 1852) under the command of General Rosas, who was for many a patriot and for as many a tyrant. He forced his followers to wear certain signs of loyalty to the party, such as a red ribbon or lace, with the party's aggressive slogan: "Viva la Confederación Argentina—Vivan los Federales, Mueran los Salvajes Unitarios": "Long Live the Federals, Death to the Savage Unitarians." Even schoolchildren wore them, such as this 10-year-old boy in Figure 2. He has light—probably blue—eyes,

as does his mulatto (?) mother. He is probably the son of an immigrant European businessman.



Figure 3: Thomas Columbus Helsby (attributed), Buenos Aires. *Young Federal Man with Inkpot and Flower Vase*, circa 1848. Sixth plate, in leather case. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

This young man wears a long Federal party ribbon with a readable slogan: "Viva la Confederación Argentina." The visible white collar was a symbol of the Unitarian party; therefore, the Federals wore a handkerchief tied tight around the neck with a knot to prevent the white of the shirt from being seen. Federals also wore a distinctive red velvet vest. Wearing certain colors such as green or light blue was strictly prohibited and a clear sign of opposition. Thomas Columbus Helsby (Buenos Aires 1822–1872) was of British origin, but was also the first daguerreotypist born in Argentina, thus named "Columbus." The three Helsby brothers, Thomas Columbus, John Stephens, and William George, are among the most prolific family of artists in the Southern Cone. Thomas was an itinerant artist traveling between Montevideo (Uruguay), Buenos Aires (Argentina), and Santiago and Valparaiso (Chile). His base city was Buenos Aires until 1853, when he moved to Chile and worked with his brother, not without serious arguments between them. William worked in Mexico as well as in Montevideo and Buenos Aires with his brother Thomas. In 1846 he moved to Chile, where he established studios in Santiago and Valparaiso. John Stephen joined William in Chile in 1854.

Thomas Helsby used a very distinctive tablecloth well in view in this image. One can be most certain that any image with this distinctive prop comes from his studio in the mid- and late 1840s, and early 1850s, in Buenos Aires.

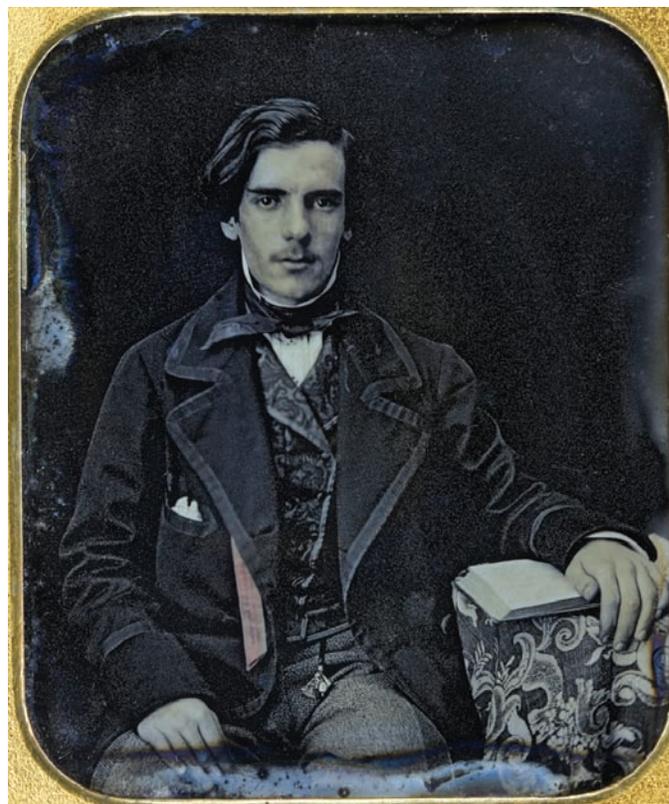


Figure 4a: Thomas Helsby (attributed), Buenos Aires. *Don Bernabé Quesada del Sar with Open Book*, circa 1848. Sixth plate, in leather case. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

The man in Figure 4a is a member of the traditional Quesada family, which is of Spanish origin. He is wearing a long red Federal ribbon with a stamped party slogan: "Viva la Confederación Argentina." The Helsby tablecloth is visible. He is one of three brothers shown in Figures 4a, 5, and 6, all purchased in December 2014.

If you look closely at the little object hanging from his waist, you will be as puzzled as I was. What is that??

As I was putting down these words, my antique dealer contacted me again and offered the object you see here in Figure 4b. It is a personal "wax and lacquer seal" worn hanging from a chatelaine (watch chain), along with a vest-watch winder. At close inspection you will be surprised to find it is the same one the subject wears in his daguerreian portrait.



Figure 4b.



Figure 4c Close up of seal seen in 4a.

This young man of means shows himself both a reader—with an open book in hand—and a writer. In these golden years of letter-writing, dealing with correspondence was a morning routine among the better-off, and carrying a personal seal was a sign of distinction, as much as having a vest watch, for which he has the winder in full view.



These two objects (daguerreotype and chatelaine) together make a perfect "double vintage" set, to greet 2015 with an ample smile.

Figure 5: Thomas Helsby (attributed), Buenos Aires. Don Vicente Gregorio Quesada del Sar with Headrest, circa 1848. Sixth plate, in leather case. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

The 18-year-old teenager shown in Figure 5 became a reputable foreign office member, and a well-known writer and historian. The headrest shown in full view has no match in local daguerreian period photography. He also wears the ribbon, with the Federal slogan. My impression is that Helsby is boasting his technical ability, with the visual statement: "Look . . . I do not use a headrest." Notice that all three brothers in Figures 4, 5, and 6 have the same "Federal style" bow tie. Purchased in December 2014.

All three Federal men (Figures 4a, 5, and 6) wear a vest that was usually of silk or other red-colored fabric, matching the party ribbon. The Federals had to show their loyalty to the party not only by pronouncing the Federal slogans, but also by assuming the "Federal look": full beard or no beard at all, red ribbon with the party slogans, red vest, red bow tie, and more.

The daguerreian artists usually colored the ribbons with red pigments—surely upon request of patrons—but in many cases, the vest was also tinted with the same party color.

Showing oneself "Federal" was a reassurance of personal and family safety. Failing to dress up as expected was asking for trouble. Signs of opposition—such as wearing green or light blue colors, or a face with a "U" beard—meant persecution, eventually exile, and, in not a few cases, even death.



Figure 6: Thomas Helsby (attributed), Buenos Aires. *The Portrait Artist: Ruperto Quesada del Sar*, circa 1848. Oval ninth plate, in leather case. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

Member's Portfolio

The portrait of Figure 6 has the distinction of being one of the few true occupational portraits in Argentina, and probably in South America. His palette has been colored to show four different oils, ready to be used. He is holding a brush in one hand and several other brushes and the palette with the other. The painted background is most unusual for a Helsby portrait. Since a painter was needed to do the job, one could assume that the boy painted it for the studio, and therefore poses proudly in front of it. This daguerreotype is presented in a case identical in design to his brother Bernabé Quesada's (Figure 4a), and is unusual for the local market. Also purchased in December 2014.

"How does this prodigy work? Where is the painter that paints the portrait? And what hand handles the divine brush that leaves stamped on a metal plate a likeness, or a building or a landscape, without leaving a single feature out? The light? But, what! Light paints?" Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (Argentinean writer and former President).

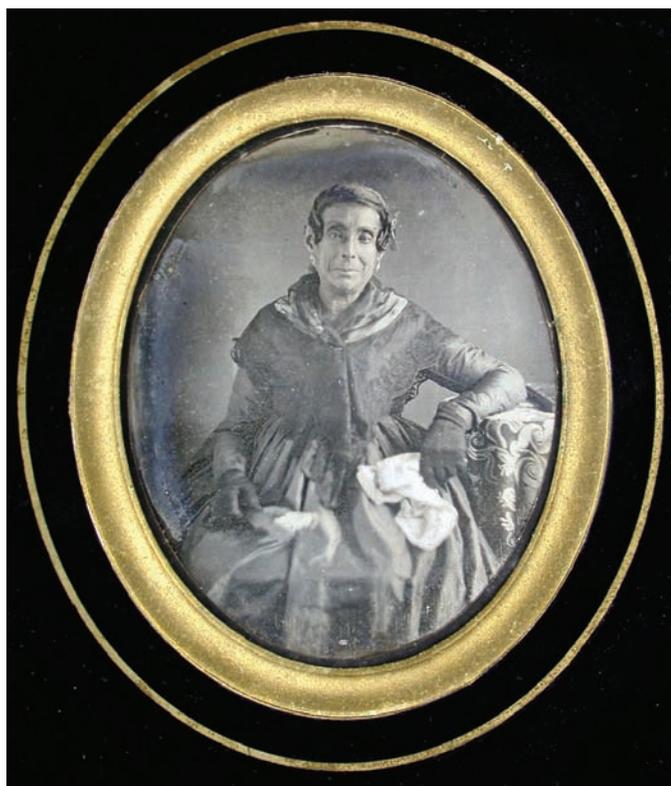


Figure 7: Thomas Helsby (attributed), Buenos Aires. *Old Lady with Federal Ribbon and Gloves*, circa 1848. Sixth plate, in frame. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

During the Federal period, even women had to wear and show signs of support to the governing party. This old lady wears a ribbon, visible at her left temple; Thomas Helsby's tablecloth is in full view. Leather cases as well as frames are very common in Argentina, probably of European—in particular, French—influence.



Figure 8: Unattributed, Buenos Aires. *Colonel José Eugenio Hernández and His Wife, María de los Santos Lobos y Galiano*, circa 1846. Sixth plate in a metal Halvorson patented steel and leather case. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

Soldiers in uniform are the only common occupational portraits in Argentina.

Colonel Hernández (Buenos Aires 1797–1847) was a fervent supporter of General Rosas, and thus proudly wears a Federal ribbon on his chest. This is the only Halvorson case that I know of in Argentina. He died in 1847, so the case must have been replaced at a later date, since it was patented nine years later, in 1856. He was the uncle of José Hernández, writer of *Martín Fierro*, the most popular "gaucho" epic poem of all time, published originally in 1872.





Figure 9: Charles de Forest Fredricks, Buenos Aires. *German Immigrants to Buenos Aires Playing Cards*, circa 1852. Full plate, in leather case. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanesian.

The mat for the image in Figure 9 has Fredricks's name stamped twice, once horizontally and once vertically. This is the only such mat that I have ever seen. Even though this group portrait was taken in the artist's studio—a fairly large one, by the way—it is a staged image representing the “Club de Residentes Extranjeros” of Buenos Aires. This was where foreigners of all nationalities used to get together for business and pleasure. We know the names of all the sitters, who are among the earliest and most successful German settlers in Argentina: L. Von Säuters, Juan Jacobo Egg, Carlos Augusto Bunge, Mr. Deichmann, Gustavo Napp, Federico Luis Brix, Enrique Harenfel, Hugo Enrique Bunge, and Luis Bernardo Wilke. The “snapshot” and candid aura, including two lit candles, makes this image unique for the local daguerreian period.

We are inclined to consider this a “narrative” group portrait, since if we are to follow the line of players from left to right, each one's attitude is discernibly different from his neighbor's, and the scene is in vibrant activity. Of all nine men, only four are looking at the camera. The first standing man is showing the card to play, the third sitting man is pondering over what card to pick and play, while the third man standing whispers what to do next. The last man on the right is pouring port or wine into his glass. He holds both the glass and the bottle in midair. The pouring hand is in full motion. On the studio carpet we can see a closed chess game, an open card case, a few empty bottles and one with a corkscrew inserted, books, and single cards. Empty and full wineglasses

cover the large studio table. The men are smoking cigars, and you can even see the smoke in the mouth of the first man on the left. The group is vibrant with activity. “Life is fun, and we are having a great time.” Agreed.

Figure 10 (below): Original document passport of Charles de Forest Fredricks, authorizing travel from Buenos Aires to Montevideo, dated January 7, 1853. His profession is “retratista”—“portrait artist.” The document is signed by the chief of police.

Fredricks opened studios in Recife (Brazil), Montevideo (Uruguay), and Buenos Aires (Argentina). Alexander Weeks, George Penabert, and Saturnino Masoni were Fredricks's partners along the way. His travels between these cities are described in the journal of one of his partners, Alexander Weeks, and have been recently published by Catherine A. Murray as *Alexander B. Weeks: A Daguerreotypist's Journal: Brooklyn, Recife, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, Toledo, Detroit*. (Mt. Pleasant, Michigan: Createspace, 2014).





Figure 11: Antonio Pozzo, Buenos Aires. *Porteño Society Lady, with “China” Servant Handing a Silver “Mate,”* circa 1858. Half plate, in a triptych frame. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

The upper-class members in Buenos Aires had household help, of black origin and/or of local “criollo” or native origin. The household servants used to be called “chinas,” so-called for their facial features, but did not actually come from China; rather, they are of local native South American origin. The standing *china* in Figure 11 does not dare to look at the camera. The sitting lady gestures pretentiously while receiving the silver “mate” pot. This receptacle was used to sip a tea infusion with a metal straw, a “bombilla,” as was—and still is—customary in the Southern Cone region. As in the United States, people who were household help were frequently raised from childhood as family members, but this portrait shows and marks a clearly different status of colonial heritage, in a most strong and unquestionable way.

The *china* would grip the mate and pour hot water into it from a kettle and hand it over to the lady to sip from with the metal “bombilla.” When the lady had finished sipping the drink, the *china* would pour hot water in it again, and reinitiate the ritual. Unlike tea, the mate infusion is continuous, since the leaves of mate are inside the receptacle, and every time hot water is poured in, the infusion can be drunk again.

Drinking or sipping mate, or “mateando,” was a habit adopted horizontally by all classes across the board. The mate ritual meant

“sharing” the container, which was handed over from one person to the next one to his side, so it was drunk and shared by couples or groups gathered together. Thus, colonial silver mates, and also very simple ones made of natural vegetable containers, were produced in large quantities. Some silver pieces have elaborate designs that are highly sought after by collectors. The mate leaves are originally from Paraguay, but the mate ritual is alive today throughout the Southern Cone, and the beverage is drunk in the south of Brazil, in Uruguay, and in Argentina as well.



Figure 12: Unattributed, Buenos Aires. *Rómulo, Alejandro, & Juan José Montes de Oca,* circa 1865. Three-quarter-plate-daguerreotype in black wall frame. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian. As most wealthy young men of Buenos Aires did, these three brothers enlisted for war with Paraguay, as shown in Figure 13.



Figure 13: Unattributed, Buenos Aires. *Rómulo, Alejandro, & Juan José Montes de Oca: The war brothers,* circa 1865. Three-quarter-plate daguerreotype in wall frame. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

Figure 13 shows the romantic attitude with which most young men of the upper class of Buenos Aires enlisted for the challenge of war with Paraguay. The one on the left touches his brother’s shoulder, expressing *friendship and companionship*. Alejandro in the middle has a most martial pose, facing the camera straight on and saluting towards the camera with his sword: *We are soldiers*. On the right, Juan José literally *embraces* his weapon, showing the romanticism with which they set out for war, not anticipating the drama, and death, that would greet them in the near future.



Figure 14: Unattributed, probably Corrientes province, Argentina. *Don Elizalde & "Fortune,"* circa 1850. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

The Elizalde family was from the province of Corrientes, and most of them were supporters of the Federal party. Even though he does not show the Federal ribbon (see Figures 3, 4a, and 5), he

has the "Federal look": full massive beard (the "U" beard with no moustache was inappropriate, since it referred to the U letter of the Unitarian party), red-colored vest, neckerchief covering the white collar of his shirt, and a most daring and preppy attitude towards the camera. Fortune, his dog, comfortably sitting still on the table, is proof of this unknown artist's skill in using a fairly short exposure for the period, while still achieving a most pleasing dual portrait with great presence.



Figure 15: Amadeo Gras, Gualaguaychú, Entre Ríos province, Argentina. *Jacoba Ramiro and Her Brother Francisco Ramiro,* dated February 1856 on the case's silk pad. Quarter-plate daguerreotype in leather case. Collection of Carlos G. Vertanessian.

Amadeo Gras was a reputable French portrait artist, who added the daguerreotype to his profession. He offered both painted and photographic portraits and was very skilled in coloring his plates. His signature is hand engraved to the plate on the lower right side. The pleasing pose and delicate coloring he used for this portrait relates to his artistic skills as a painter.

Parts Two and Three of this Portfolio will follow in subsequent issues.

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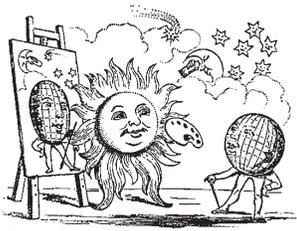
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